



Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

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Simon McMillan
Chief Executive Officer
City of Whitehorse
379-397 Whitehorse Road
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Ref: 2022287

22 September 2020

Dear Mr McMillan

HEALESVILLE FREEWAY RESERVE – PROPOSAL FOR WHITEHORSE CITY COUNCIL

On 14 August 2020, myself and Dick Ford, Regional Manager of Land and Built Environment, held a meeting with several representatives from the City of Whitehorse to explore Council's potential interest in becoming future manager of the land currently known as the Healesville Freeway Reserve (HFR).

Whilst Parks Victoria has previously been flagged as the likely future manager of the HFR, Parks Victoria has recently expressed to DELWP their view that the HFR does not align strategically with their core role and would invite an alternate land manager being identified and appointed.

The purpose of this letter is to provide yourself and your staff with an overview of the land and all associated matters to enable Council to review and evaluate whether it wishes to express interest in becoming Committee of Management over the HFR.

1. Land Overview and Status

The land currently known as the Healesville Freeway Reserve covers 32 hectares of land and comprises 11 parcels (**Appendix 1**) that were surrendered to the Crown by the Department of Transport (DoT)/VicRoads in October 2018.

All parcels are now reserved for "Conservation, recreation and leisure" purposes under the *Crown Land Reserves Act 1978*, and DELWP is currently managing the reserve as interim manager until such time as a permanent land manager is appointed.

Since the land transferred to the Crown, DELWP and DoT has undertaken a range of remediation work throughout the linear reserve to prepare the land for the appointment of a land manager. This work has included demolition of derelict building, removal of dumped rubbish including building waste and asbestos, and removal of invasive weeds.

DELWP has an interim management plan (**Appendix 2**) in place for HFR that is focused on reducing risk, maintain the accessibility for pedestrians, responding to complaints and preparing the land for handover to the long-term land manager.

2. Boundaries and Current Zoning

The boundaries of HFR are represented in **Appendix 3** and highlighted in bright green.

Some parcels are currently zoned PPRZ, whilst other parcels are zoned GRZ5 in part or wholly. DELWP believes all parcels within the corridor should be zoned PPRZ, and DELWP's Planning Unit will facilitate all necessary rezoning. Regardless of which authority becomes land manager, DELWP will align with Council prior to initiating the rezoning of relevant parcels.

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Note there is one additional parcel at 71 Morack Road Vermont (SPI 1\LP53195) that is currently still owned by DoT and subject to a residential lease to a long-term tenant. That lease will remain in place in perpetuity until the tenant either elects to terminate the lease or passes away, after which point that parcel will be surrendered to the Crown and available for incorporation into the HFR.

3. Funding

In 2019 and 2020, DoT sold several freehold parcels of land adjoining the boundary of the current HFR corridor. The proceeds of these sales are saved in trust for assignment to the eventual land manager, to fund park planning, establishment and initial maintenance.

As of the date of this letter, **\$10,585,327** is currently being held in trust by DoT.

In addition, DoT is owner of 2 additional parcels of land at 79 and 79A Morack Road, Vermont (SPI 1\TP757678 and 1\TP257703) that are also flagged for sale, with the proceeds to be added to the funding for the future land manager. DoT estimate an additional **\$1,000,000** likely to be generated from the sale and added to the existing funds above. The parcels are currently zoned PPRZ and will need to be rezoned prior to the land being put on the market.

The funding identified above is one-off in nature. There is no ongoing funding allocated from Government at this time.

Question for Council:

The land adjoining 79/79A Morack Road is currently zoned NRZ5. DELWP has offered to rezone 79/79A Morack Road on behalf of DoT whilst we rezone the anomalous parcels within the HFR corridor. **Can Council please confirm that it agrees with 79/79A Morack Road being rezoned to NRZ5 in alignment with the adjoining land?**

4. Nadrasca Farm

Nadrasca, a disability service provider, operate a community farm at 82 Morack Road, which is part of parcel 2159\PP3337 (**Appendix 4**). The land is currently zoned PPRZ.

Nadrasca's tenure on the site is based on a license previously held with DoT. That licence is now in overholding and it is suggested that DELWP maintain a direct lease with Nadrasca for that portion of parcel 2159\PP3337 it occupies and exclude it from the rest of the HFR land to be assigned to the future land manager.

We understand Nadrasca may currently slightly encroach outside of their license footprint into the HFR corridor. DELWP would address and resolve that directly with Nadrasca as part of establishing a new lease for the site.

5. Private Encroachments

DELWP is aware of a small number of private encroachments onto parcel 2152\PP3337 near Bellbird Dell Reserve. These appear to involve an incorrect alignment of the rear boundary fence line of approximately 5 houses in Glenora Drive, Vermont (**Appendix 5**).

DELWP would work to resolve these encroachments prior to a land manager being appointed. Given the minor extent and length of time of the encroachments, DELWP may elect to resolve the issue through adjusting the parcel boundary.

6. Vermont Secondary School

The school had previously communicated to DELWP their concern over a derelict house adjacent to the school at 67 Morack Road (parcel 2160\PP3337) which had attracted antisocial behaviour (Appendix 6). That house has since been demolished and the adjacent land is now fully cleared of structures.

We understand from our discussions with Council that the school has previously indicated an interest in obtaining additional land to facilitate the school's growth.

7. Community Consultation and Concept Plan

DELWP engaged a consultancy named CoDesign in 2016 to undertake community engagement activities to inform a concept plan for the HFR. The engagement received 620 direct participants and submissions which included the community's different views on the future purpose and use of the reserve. These included suggestions for shared use paths for cyclists and pedestrians, on and off lead dog areas, open space for recreational play, and a focus on biodiversity values.

These engagement activities informed a Concept Plan that was finalised in 2018. The concept plan was intended to help inform the future land manager when undertaking detailed master planning for the reserve.

At this stage, no further detailed planning or implementation of paths, functional spaces etc. has been undertaken.

A copy of the 2018 Healesville Freeway Reserve Concept Plan, incorporating the 2016 community engagement, is enclosed with this letter.

8. Naming

In 2018, DELWP conducted a community survey via mailout to adjacent suburbs and via a survey on the Engage Victoria website, seeking suggestions for a new name for the reserve.

135 name suggestions were received, almost all of which were unique.

- 58% of suggestions followed 1 of 7 reoccurring 'themes'.
- The most common 'theme', at 23% of all responses, requested giving the reserve an indigenous name.

The land is currently in disputed Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) status. DELWP's last commitment to the community was that we would follow-up with the three aboriginal organisations with an interest in the land, being the Bunurong, Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung,

On initial approach to Bunurong and Boonwurrung were initially interested in participating, however Wurundjeri declined, based on the disputed status of the land. DELWP's Aboriginal Inclusion Officer has recently raised the opportunity with the organisations again and we are awaiting responses.

A copy of the Renaming Survey Results is enclosed with this letter.

9. Drainage Issues

Through our interim management of the HFR, DELWP is aware that some areas of the reserve may be subject to stormwater inundation issues during heavy rains. From both observation and feedback from residents, the recurring area of concern is parcel 2151\PP3337, between the Whitehorse Horticultural Centre and Community garden to the north, and houses along the boundary to the south.

DELWP recently created makeshift trenches along the southern boundary of that parcel to prevent inundation into the rear yards of residences along Murray Court, as an interim solution ahead of DELWP installing improved drainage in that area.

DELWP does not have any formal reports or surveys in relation to drainage across the corridor that we can provide to Council.

10. Residual waste and contamination

DELWP has been progressively working through the linear corridor to clear waste and contamination relating to previous occupation and other uses of the land. To date large amounts of asbestos and building waste has been cleared by both DELWP and DoT prior to the land being surrendered to the Crown.

DELWP is aware of additional areas which contain or may contain waste requiring removal,

- Central area of parcel 2151\PP3337 between Teal Court and Bellara Street; some residual building material has been discovered after removing dense weed and undergrowth. DELWP is currently obtaining quotes to remove this waste within the coming month.
- Eastern end of parcel 2151\PP3337 close to Terrara Road; this area used to contain horse agistment, and DELWP field crews are aware of star pickets and other residual materials that are gradually being removed as they are discovered.
- Parcel 2160\PP3337 (67 Morack Road) is likely to contain some residual building material following the recent demolition of the house on that parcel. DELWP will work through and identify any residual waste as it progressively clears that parcel of weeds.

It is DELWP's intention that all the areas listed above will be cleared prior to a land manager being appointed.

We recognise this is an initial step in formally opening a dialogue with Council on its potential interest in managing the Healesville Freeway Reserve, and that there will likely be follow-up queries and clarifications required to enable Council to make a formal decision.

Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0436 945 640 or david.adeson@delwp.vic.gov.au.

Regards,



David Adeson
Program Manager, Land and Built Environment
Port Phillip Region

Encl.